A Memories of Time and Place (4)

Akka: The walled city of secrets.

Written by:
Rawda Al-Farkh Al-Hudhud

Translated by: Jude Taha

Edited by : Isra Radwan

Introduction

“The Right Of Return” to Palestine remained and will remain, It is the right of every Palestinian man and woman who left his land forcibly and unjustly when the Zionist Jews occupied Palestine...TheTthree sisters dream of returning: “Izdi», «Afti» and «Angi» kept their dreams of returning to Palestine, until they reached their seventies years old. When they traveled to Palestine to visit it, the strange man met them with his magic cups and magic orange juice, they returned to their childhood; to visit the stolen cities of Palestine: «Jaffa, Acre, Haifa, Jerusalem, Nazareth, Lydda”... as they visited before.

Who was this man who would drag them or follow them to these cities?! And what is the role of the black cat in the Wonder Girls journey?!

These are stories: «From the memory of time and place», and that is the project: «This Is My City»...

The writer
Rawda Al Farkh Al Hudhud
Amman 18/1/2022



When the three sisters, Izdi, Afti and Anji, boarded the ship, their eyes concentrated on two main things: The strange man with black eyes, and the cups of the magical orange juice on the tray.

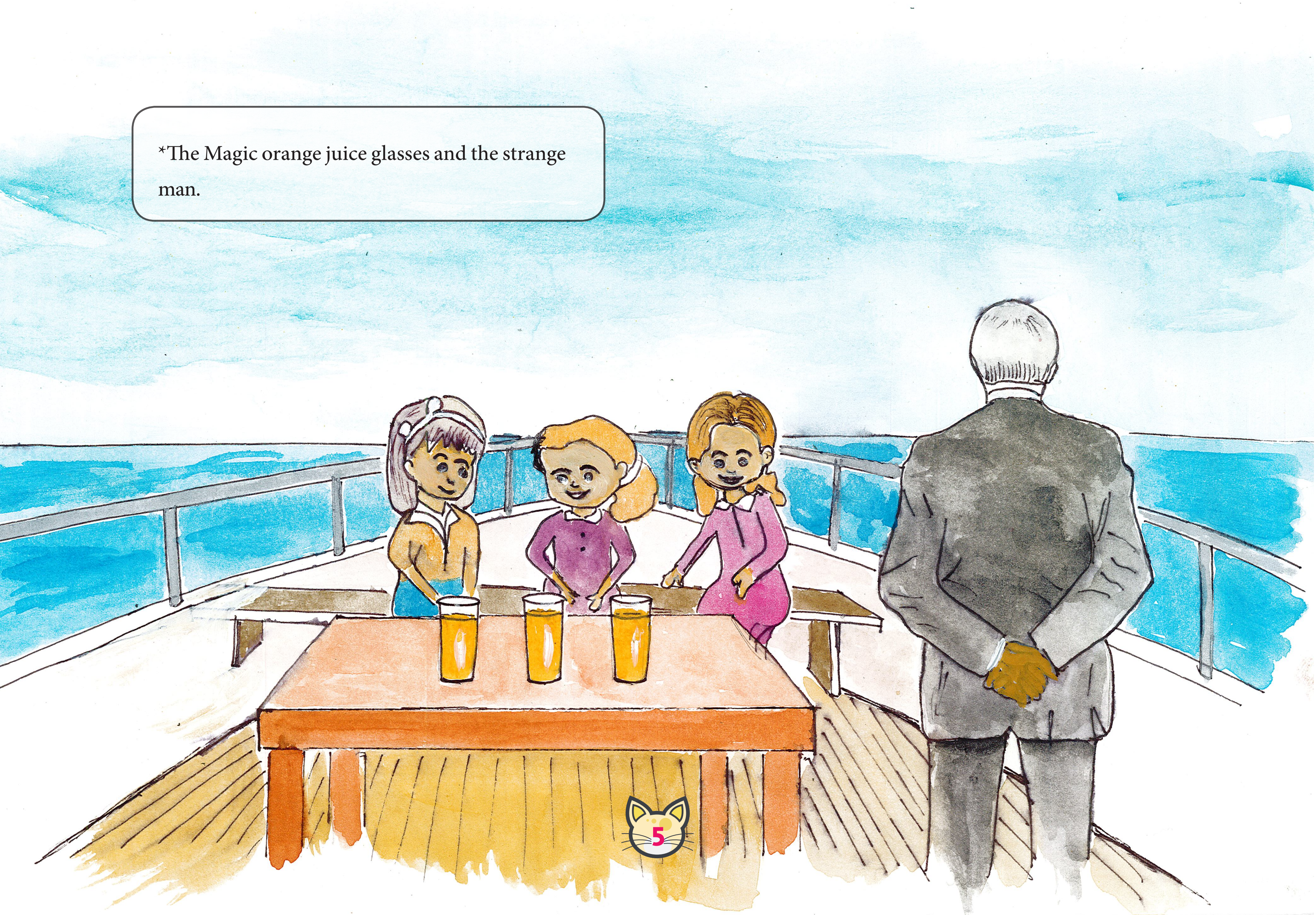
The girls were so afraid of everything surrounded them, holding their hands tightly, once the stranger pulled them to the deck of this ship. They had watched their city, Jaffa, wondering what he is going to do with them and where he is going to take them.

The waves rolled and lapped against the ship, causing it to rise and fall. It was not a decent actual ship. It is closer to a boat that swayed with every wave of the great sea,
After a while they found themselves surrounded by water from all directions .. water is everywhere!



Izdi and her sisters grew more scared as the man disappeared from their sight. Fear swelled in theier hearts as nothing remained in their entire uni-

*The Magic orange juice glasses and the strange man.

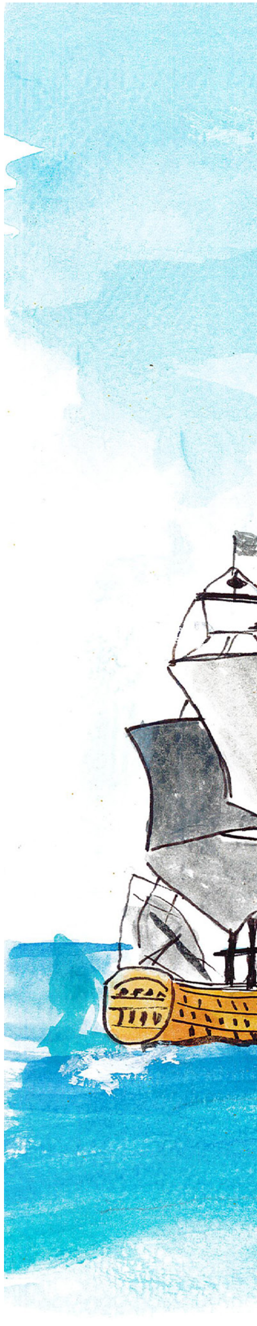


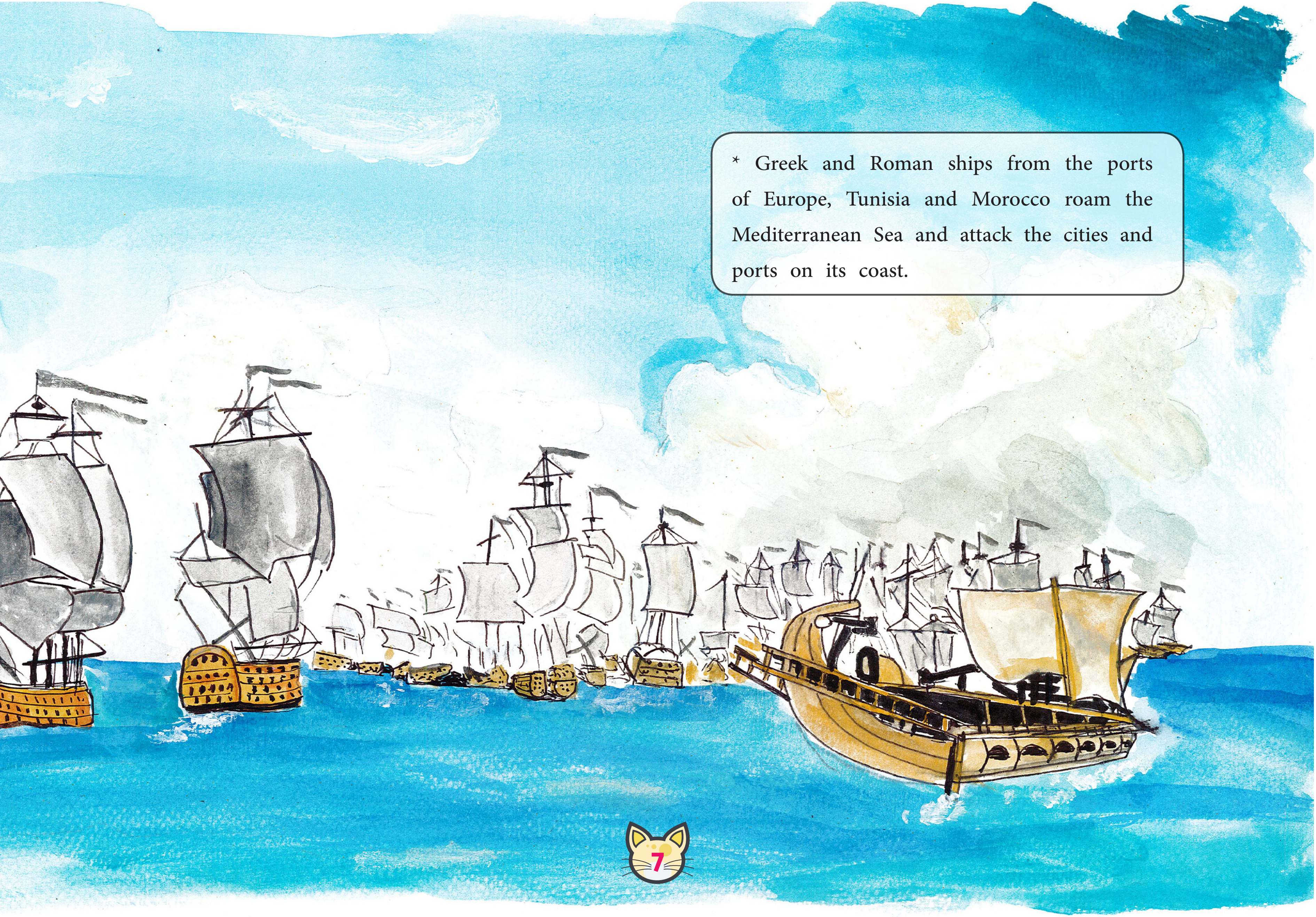
verse except these waves, this great sea, and these three cups!
Izdi started thinking, “I will throw these cups into the sea, since no one can see me!»

So, she picked up the first cup and threw it into the sea! Almost instantly, thousands of boats appeared to fill the horizon, small and large boats, colored, and black wood boats! Boats with sails and others without! Men scattered noisily all across the boats talking, screaming and arguing. Men with shaggy thick beards and beardless sailors, others with hair flying ruffling on their foreheads and shoulders, and others bald.

Their clothes, daggers, and swords were old fashioned, where the sisters had only seen in movies.
“Afti” jumped out of her seat excitedly, as if she had discovered a surprising thing and shouted, “Look!” pointing at the ships.

«These are Greek ships! The Romans and Greeks are coming to our shores





* Greek and Roman ships from the ports of Europe, Tunisia and Morocco roam the Mediterranean Sea and attack the cities and ports on its coast.

and ports! They are the ancient warriors and some of the earliest merchants, who used to visit the old coastal cities for invading or trading"

"Do you remember the history teacher who told us about the wars and trade trips between the ports and cities of the Mediterranean see? We, my dear sisters, are in the middle of that great sea! And these boats and ships have sailed this sea since ancient times, carrying merchants from city to another, from Tyre, Sidon, to Akka, Haifa, and Jaffa! From Ashkelon to Tunis, Carthage, Genoa, to Marseille and Cyprus, too!"

She continued, "The ships also carry soldiers and warriors, coming from more powerful countries to control the weaker ones. My sisters, we are in one of the most important and significant seas! The sea where all ancient civilizations and history established on its shores".

While Anji was listening carefully to what their sister, Afti, was saying, Izdi looked at her and burst out laughing and said,

"Calm down! Dear. All the ships and boats have left and there are no more wars, look at the sea. It's calm and beautiful."

Afti responded, "Of course! It is beautiful and peaceful! The Arab people



who built these ports thousands years ago defended them and expelled the enemies from the area!”

The girls rubbed their eyes, and suddenly the black-eyed man returned and commanded, “Get ready, girls, you are going to visit a city that you have never seen before!”

The boat stopped abruptly in a strange, wondrous port, surrounded by high walls on all sides of the sea, beautiful, huge walls with what looked like windows, and high towers raised above it as if it overlooks the sea to protect the city.

Afti glanced at the huge mighty wall, and contemplated the sea surrounding the city behind the walls on both sides, the western and the southern, and she cried loudly,

“This is the city of Akka! I swear it is the city of Akka[1]! We are still in Palestine. This is Akka on the coast of Palestine in the north .I will take you on a tour. I may know some things about it and its history.”



1 Akka was built by arab Canaanite tribes more than 2000 years BC, and since it was a natural port, it flourished as a place for docking of ships, and it was distinguished by shipbuilding and repair.


* The hero «Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi» in the Palestine plain is preparing his soldiers to liberate Palestine from the forces of the Crusaders.

The sisters rushed to get down from the boat as soon as it docked. As they climbed down the wooden ladder, suddenly a black cat jumped by their feet, meowing heavily, and ran to the shore before them, disappearing in moments from view!

Cautiously and carefully, the sisters steeped on the sidewalk when an elegant young man approached them, “Hello girls, are you Arab?” he asked.

“Yes, we are…of curse we are .. Who are you?” They all answered simultaneously.

“I am a guard in this city, in Akka, and a guide for visitors and tourists here,” he replied.

Afti enthusiastically turned to him and asked, “Do you know Salah Al-Deen Al-Ayyoubi? Do you know how the leader Saladin liberated the cities of Palestine from the Crusaders?”

The guide responded with a smile, “I do know! And I know who built it thousands of years ago, whom from the Muslims leader liberate it, and who ruled it from the Palestinians and Arabs.”

Anji, approaching him cautiously and asked, “You know all this?!”

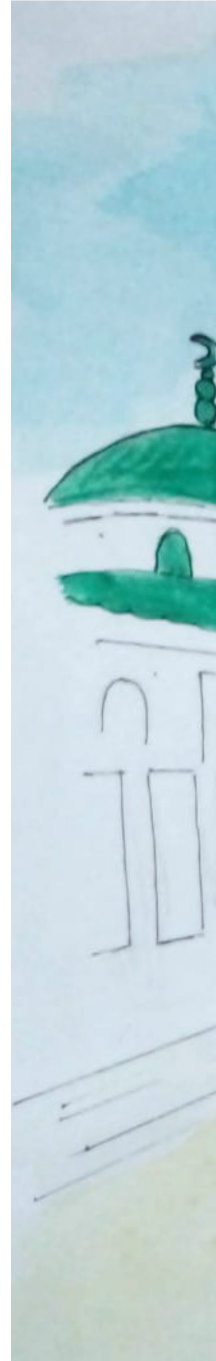




* Drawing of the eastern coast of the Mediterranean.

“And more, what do you want to know?” Said the guide.
“Who’s the Muslim leader that liberates Akka?” Asked Anji.
“That’s easy! It is Sharhabeel bin Hasna who came from the Arabian Peninsula with an army of Muslims, and many of the people of Palestine and Akka converted into Islam on his hands. The Caliph of the Muslims Muawiyah bin Abi Sufyan who lived in Damascus. You know Damascus, don›t you?!” Asked the guide.
“Yes, we do!” She agreed.
“The Caliph knew that the people of Akka mastered the craft of ships, so he ordered to construct a number of strong warships, and trained his soldiers to sail, then sent them to conquer the island of Cyprus. It was first fleet and the first naval war for Muslims and Arabs!”
Angie jumped up excitedly and urged the guide to continue!
“Wow... wow! Continue and tell us more!” She insisted.
After a while he asked, “Are you hungry? Perhaps you are. So let me take

2 .The Battle of Dhat al-Mawsari(The Battle of the Masts) happened in 655/35H. It was named after the masts, meaning the sails found on ancient sailing ships



* Like tourists, the three girls sat eating delicious fish in Acre, the city of walls and secrets.



you to eat the Akka's famous and delicious fish!"

The guide took the sisters to eat the fish at the port, and no sooner had they sat down then the black cat with green eyes jumped on the table. The sisters jumped! Afti fell off her seat, but Anji proved that she was the bravest one when she sat still and scolded the cat and successfully got rid of it.

As soon as Izdi sat back on the table, she heard a whispering sound coming from one side of the port.

"I am Issa Al-Awwam ... Come, do not be afraid," the voice whispered

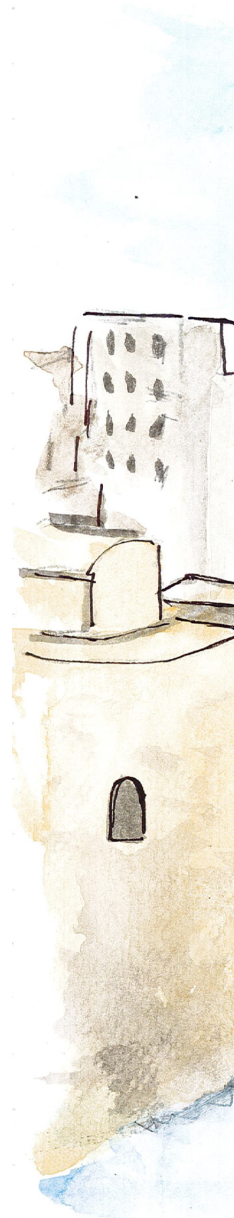
Izdi whispered in at Afti's ear, "Are you listening? A voice saying its Issa Al-Awwam! It is calling me!"

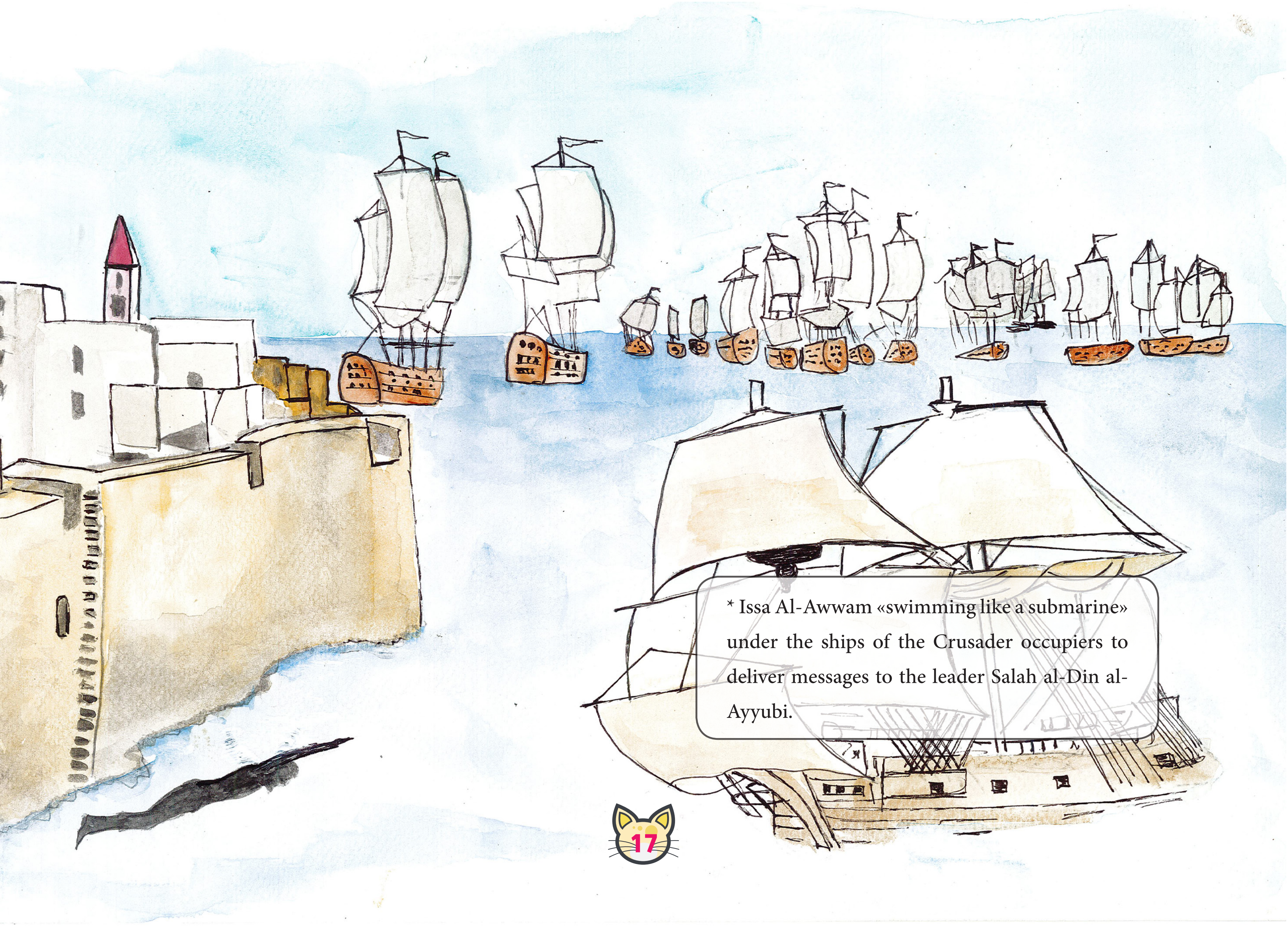
Shaking her head Afti exclaimed, "Issa Al-Awwam!"

Anji asked» Is Issa Al-Awwam here? «

The guide interfered and added, "Yes Issa Al-Awwam did not die, he is still alive, but in the hearts of the people of Akka … Do you know his story? I will tell it to you!"

"You know that the Crusaders came with massive armies to occupy Pales-





* Issa Al-Awwam «swimming like a submarine» under the ships of the Crusader occupiers to deliver messages to the leader Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi.

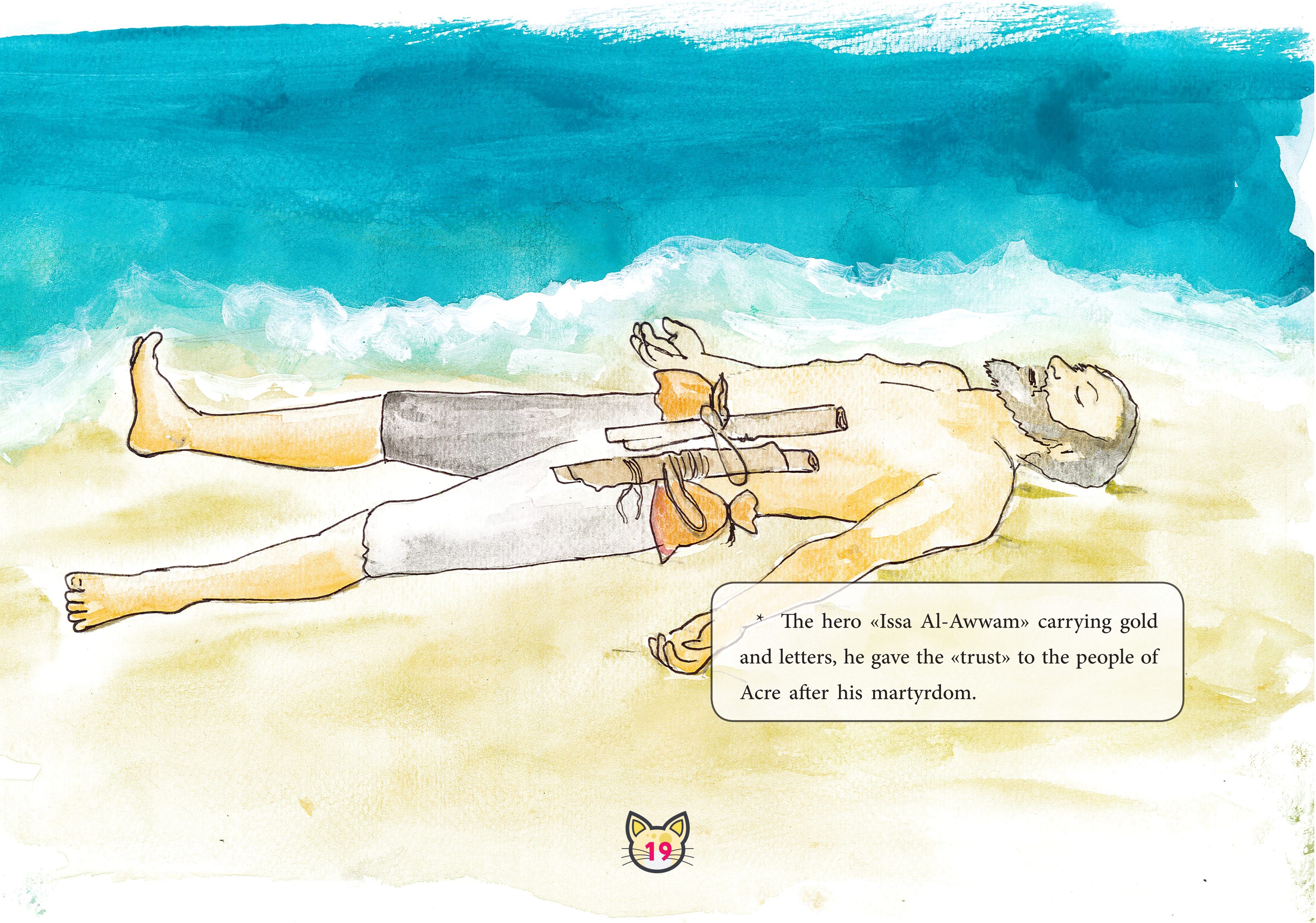
tine, Syria, and Lebanon[2]. Very large ships and barges, five stories high and more, came to Akka and stopped in its port, besieging it and preventing anyone from leaving or entering it, in order to occupy it and demolish its walls," he explained.

"Issa Al-Awwam was one of the bravest patriot citizens of Akka who defended his city nobly. He had to contact the commander Salah Al-Deen Al-Ayoubi and inform him of Akka's conditions and the ships besieging it, and then take military instructions and orders, as well as the "gold" to ensure the survival of Akka's people," he added.

"As the city was besieged, Issa swam like a submarine under water and the Crusaders ships to reach the commander Salah Al-Deen Al-Ayoubi who was near the Palestinian coastal plain. When he returned to Akka, he would send a carrier pigeon to inform the commander Salah Al-Deen Al-Ayoubi of his arrival," he continued.

"But, once it was very cold, he disappeared into the sea and did not return to Akka. People grieved and stood in front of the port daily waiting for him

2 The Crusades attack Arab and Muslim Countries lasted from 1096 to 1291 AD.



* The hero «Issa Al-Awwam» carrying gold and letters, he gave the «trust» to the people of Acre after his martyrdom.

to return to Akka, but he did not."

"Days and weeks later, people lost hope of his return. His corpse appeared in the sea, a martyr carrying gold and messages on his waist to deliver it to his family and his people. It was a sad day that is still remembered by all the people of Akka and Palestine, because Issa Al-Awwam did return—dead body— to deliver the things entrusted to him to their owners!" He explained.

The guide concluded enthusiastically saying, "The invaders were defeated horribly by Salah Al-Deen Al-Ayoubi and his army. It was a great triumph for Akka against Crusaders[3]."

Izdi then asked, "Do you also know Zahir al-Omar[4]?"

"Of course I know him!" confirmed the guide.

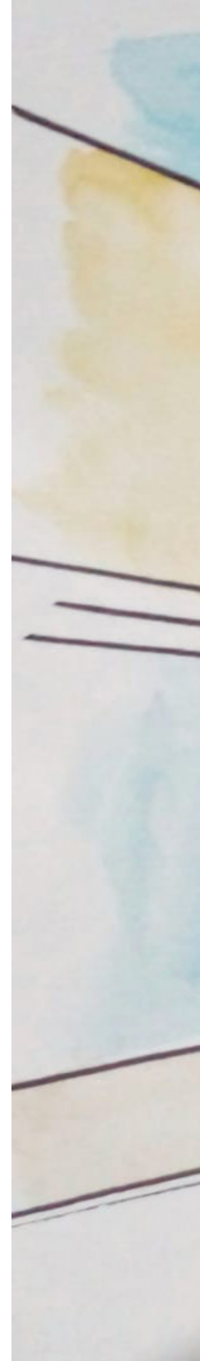
Izdi said eagerly, "Zahir Al-Omar, how much I have heard about him and have studied about his courage and love for his city and the villages around it. Can you show me his palace, guards, and horses?"

"With pleasure sister… Come with me, come with me!"

---

3 Salah Al-Deen al-Ayoubi won over the Crusaders and returned Jerusalem to Islamic rule at the Battle of Hattin in 583 H – 1187 AD.

4 Zahir Al-Omar ruled the city of Akka and the surrounding cities of Palestine for almost 70 years (1705-1775).





* The archaeological square in the center of Acre, where celebrations take place and tourists gathered.

The young man rode a beautiful white horse, while the girls rode a chariot pulled by two horses They headed for to the old Saraya : the palace at the top of the city of Akka.

The wall started from the palace of Zahir Al-Omar, the Saraya, and the great gate of Akka, then it went around the western and southern side of the port until it reached the other side, the second gate of the wall where the lions gate locates, and the rocks which are carved with lions statues are around.

The city of Akka and the villages around it were guarded by Zahir Al-Omar's soldiers from any attacks .The borders are large, reaching the city of Nazareth and Lake Tiberias in the east, the city of Haifa in the south, and the city of Sidon in the north. It even reaches the borders of the cities of Beirut and Damascus.

Afti was happier than her two sisters as she followed up with the guide on Zahir Al-Omar prosperous era in the history of Palestine. The guide was astonished when she asked about Ahmad Pasha Al-Jazzar[5].



---

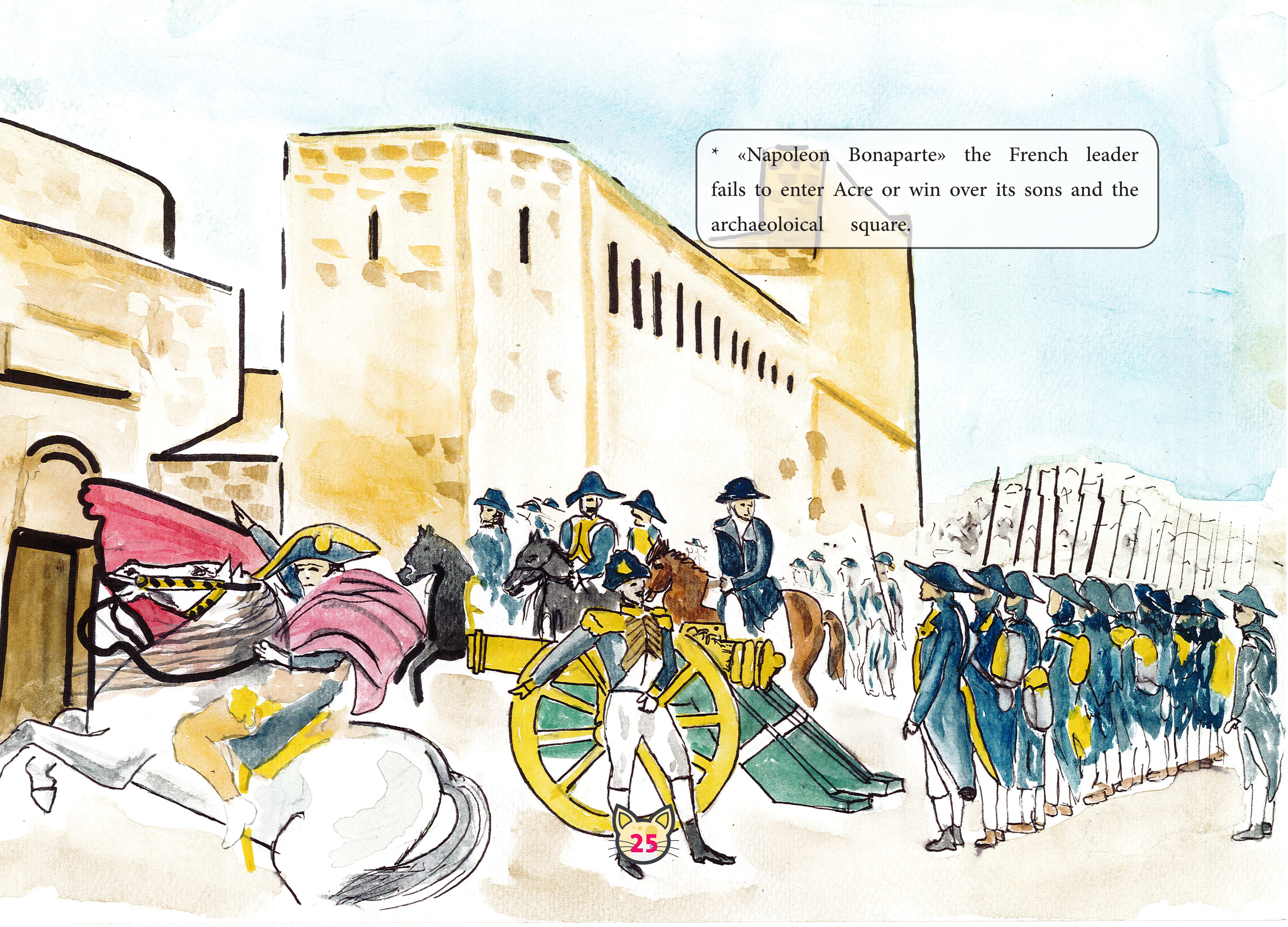
5 Ahmad Pasha Al-Jazzaris one of the most important rulers of Akka. He ruled it between 1775 and 1804.



* «Zahir Al-Omar», the Palestinian Arab Muslim, the son of Acre, its hero and ruler for seventy years.

“You know about him too?” The guide asked surprisingly.
« Yes I know him! He was a ruler who loved Akka and enjoyed building the most beautiful Khans here. I know all about what he built the beautiful mosque, the waterway and the castle.» she answered.
Afti stopped speaking as she remembered Khan Al-Jazzar and Khan Al-Shuna. She asked, “Does Khan Al-Jazzar still receive merchants and their horses for trade purposes or host them and then send their goods to all countries of the world from the port?”
The guide laughed and said, “Somehow yes! To a certain extent. But you know that the mosque was built, by ruler Ahmed Pasha Al-Jazzar, is still, to this day, the most beautiful mosque in the north of Palestine.”
“Yes... yes, I know — and I even know that Ahmed Pasha Al-Jazzar was the one who defended Akka and its walls against the attack of Napoleon Bonaparte, who came to occupy Egypt, Palestine, and the Levant as a whole. Many of his soldiers died; either by the sword or by the plague.” She clarified.





* «Napoleon Bonaparte» the French leader fails to enter Acre or win over its sons and the archaeoloical square.

The guide said,
"For sixty-four days, Napoleon[6] and his soldiers besieged Akka with their tanks and soldiers, trying to destroy its walls and occupy it. But they did not succeed. And he returned defeated."
The guide continued,
"Sixty-four days, Napoleon knocked on the gates of Akka, and turned back disappointedly. He occupied Egypt and from it he came to all the coastal cities, except Akka, which remained rebellious, defending itself with its walls and the bravery of its people."
Suddenly, Izdi pointed to a beautiful girl in a white wedding dress with her groom and their family around them saying, "Look how beautiful this bride is in her white dress, and her groom in his black suit!"
The guide said, "Yes, the sons and daughters of Akka celebrate their weddings and take memorial photos with the beautiful monuments in this archaeological square.»
No sooner had he finished saying it than Izdi cried out, "Where is the citadel,

6 Napoleon Bonaparte›s campaign broke away from the walls of Aca in 1799 AD.



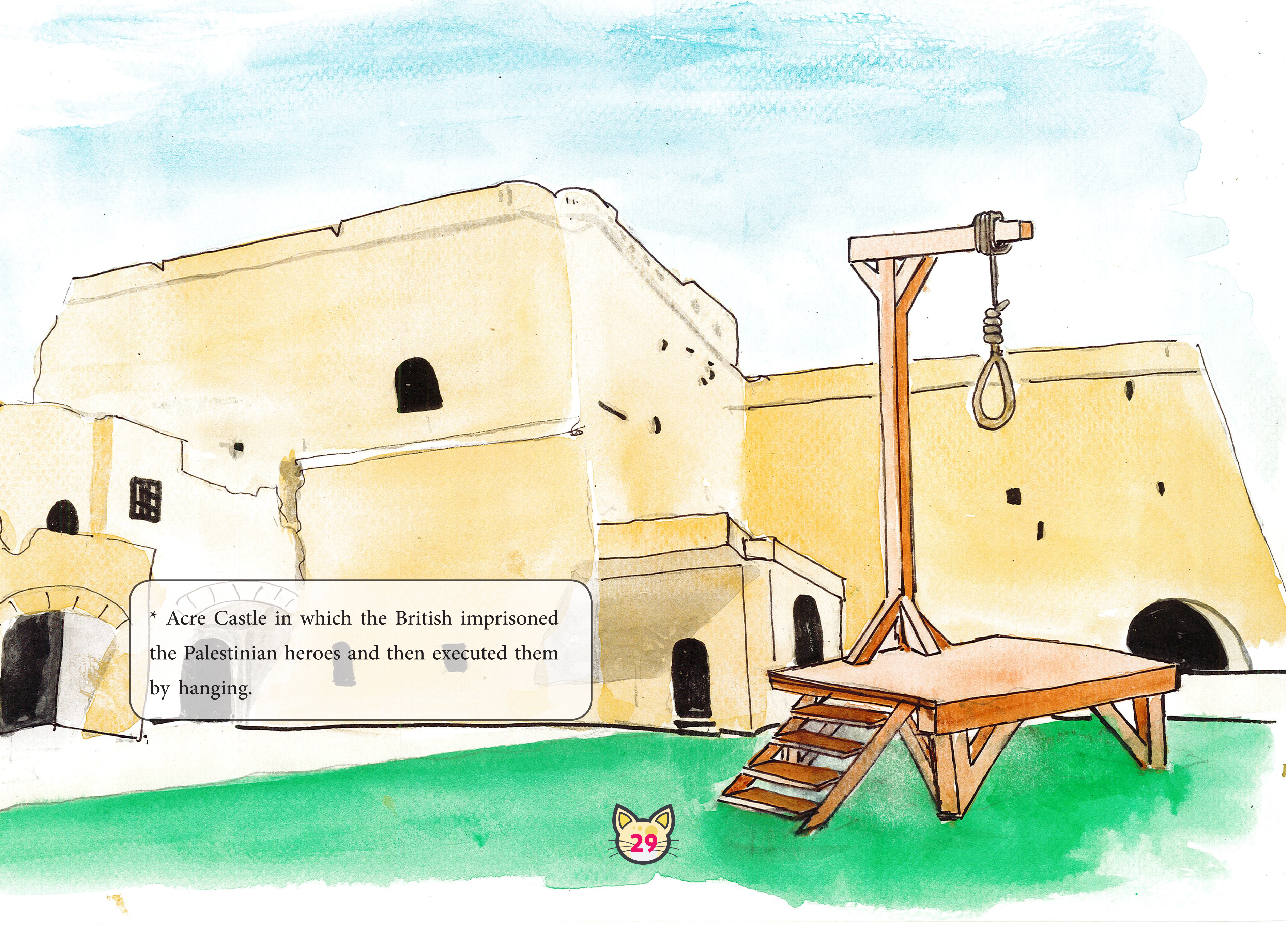
* A trip to the magnificent «Zahir Al-Omar» palace.



Muhammad? Where is the citadel? Take us there!"
"Let's go!" He suggested.
Suddenly the black cat jumped up looking at them with piercing eyes.
While looking at the cat the guide said, "The citadel is the worst place for us, the people of Akka, for it is the dark prison in which the British imprisoned the people of Palestine as punishment for defending their country."
He continued with sadness evident on his face, "When the British executed the first three Palestinian youth[7] Muhammad Jamjoum, Fuad Hijazi, and Atta Al-Zir in this fortress, all the people of Akka and thousands from Palestinian cities went out to the streets of Akka, saluting them and chanting their names. Even women and children mourned their deaths, with sadness over their death but pride at their courage."
Ifti began to sing in a warm and sad voice,
«From Akka's prison, a funeral came. Muhammad Jamjoum and Fouad Hijazi were their names.»

7 They were executed on Tuesday, June 17, 1930.





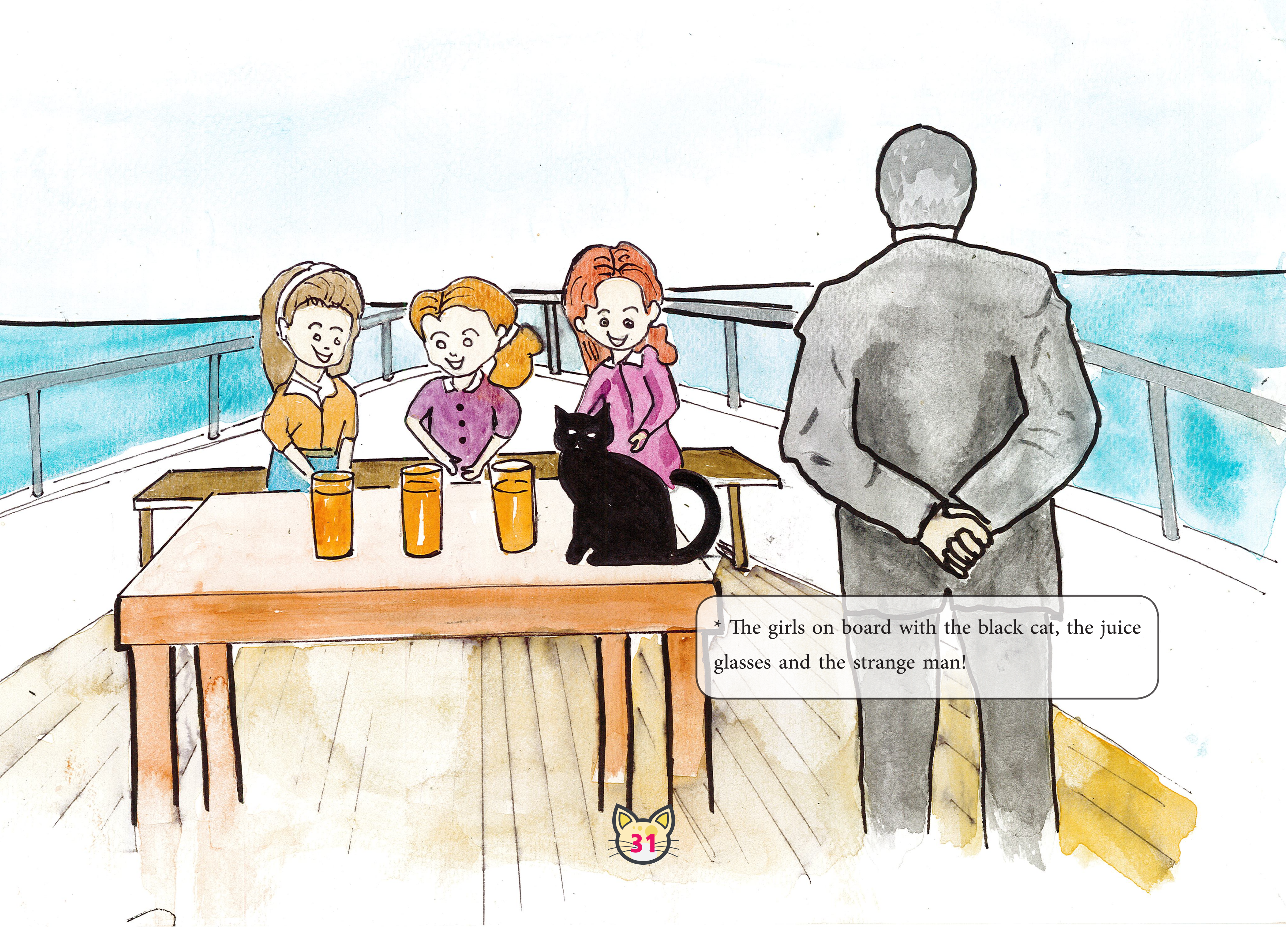
* Acre Castle in which the British imprisoned the Palestinian heroes and then executed them by hanging.

«Show my people; show the british High Commissioner our anger, prit and ego.
No sooner had the sister reached the castle; the guide finished his speech about the Citadel, and the English colonial and the Jews who occupied the land of Palestine. Then suddenly the strange man with black eyes shouted at them saying,
“Come on! Back to the ship! Back to your places and don›t move…It’s time to leave.”
The black cat moved and jumped into the ship before them.
The girls boarded the ship confused and wondering, where he will take them? And if the weird black cat going to stay with them!



****

The End



* The girls on board with the black cat, the juice glasses and the strange man!

